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District of Arizona*

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MEXICAN CITIZENS SENTENCED TO PRISON & FACING DEPORTATION FOR SMUGGLING CHILDREN

TUCSON, Ariz. – In separate, unrelated cases, Norma Contreras-Mejia, 26, of Nogales, Ariz., was sentenced today to 15 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Raner C. Collins and Judith Ibarra-Rendon, 25, of Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mex., was sentenced on October 2, 2007, to 15 months in prison by U.S. District Chief Judge John M. Roll.

Contreras-Mejia, a Mexican citizen and Permanent Resident Alien of the U.S., pleaded guilty on January 11, 2007 to Conspiracy to Transport an Illegal Alien for Profit and Ibarra-Rendon, a Mexican citizen with a Laser Visa authorizing entry into the U.S., pleaded guilty on July 3, 2007 to the same charge. Both are pending removal proceedings from the U.S. as a result of their convictions. The removal will occur at the completion of their respective prison sentences.

Contreras-Mejia admitted that on October 4, 2006, she presented herself for admission into the U.S. via the pedestrian lane at the Nogales, Ariz. Port of Entry. With her was a 5-year-old girl, whose hair had been cut to make her look like a boy and whom Contreras-Mejia believed to be a boy. She told U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials that the child was her male cousin and presented a birth certificate as identification. Contreras-Mejia eventually admitted that she did not know the child and that her brother-in-law had provided her with his own son's birth certificate. She had picked up the child from two unknown women in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico and her brother-in-law had promised to pay her \$250 to deliver the child to an unknown person in Nogales, Ariz.

Ibarra-Rendon admitted that on December 21, 2006, she applied for admission into the U.S. at the Douglas, Ariz. Port of Entry. She was driving her own vehicle and had a six-year-old boy in the back seat. She claimed the boy was her son and presented her son's and her own laser visas. Ibarra-Rendon eventually admitted that she was not related to the boy and did not know his last name. She had picked up the boy in Agua Prieta from an unknown woman and was paid \$300 up front by a woman named "Beba." Ibarra-Rendon was to be paid an additional \$100 to deliver the boy to a third unknown woman in Douglas, Ariz. Further investigation showed that the boy was a Peruvian citizen with no legal authorization to enter the U.S.

The 5-year-old girl from Mexico was returned to family members with assistance of Mexican authorities. The Peruvian boy was turned over to U.S. authorities to be reunited with his family abroad.

The investigations in these cases were conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in Nogales and Douglas, Ariz. The prosecution was handled by Mary Sue Feldmeier, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR 06-1811-TUC-RCC-CRP (Contreras-Mejia)
CR-07-0119-TUC-JMR-HCE (Ibarra-Rendon)
RELEASE NUMBER: 2007-213(Contreras & Ibarra)

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